

Pres. Reagan's request to Congress
for contra funding

19 March 1986

TO THE CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES:

Since I transmitted my message to the Congress on February 25 requesting additional assistance for the Nicaraguan democratic resistance, I have heard from many thoughtful Members of Congress, as well as from Latin American leaders and the leaders of the Nicaraguan democratic resistance. Many have raised the question of how the additional authority I have requested could be implemented so as to help persuade the Government of Nicaragua to engage in a serious effort to resolve the conflict in Central America through peaceful means.

I am determined to make every effort to protect our vital interests and achieve peace without further loss of life. That is why on February 10 I proposed simultaneous talks by the Government of Nicaragua -- with their opposition and with the United States. That is why on February 25 I affirmed my commitment to direct the additional assistance I have requested toward a comprehensive and verifiable agreement among the countries of Central America, based on the Contadora Document of Objectives. And that is why on March 7 I appointed Ambassador Philip Habib as my special envoy for Central America.

On Sunday night, I described to the American people the threat to our security that confronts us in Central America. As I said then, we are still willing to pursue vigorously a diplomatic effort to achieve a lasting peace. Approval of my request for additional assistance to the Nicaraguan democratic resistance does not mean that a military solution is inevitable. It is, however, essential that the Congress act now to approve this assistance if diplomacy is to have a chance. Accordingly, I am providing in this message a further explanation of how I will implement the authority I have requested.